

Senate Bill 478

Sponsor: Senator Dan Weinberg

Implement Suicide Prevention Program

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PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE & SAFETY

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Bill No. SB 478

Testimony in support of SB 478

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Member of Helena Suicide Prevention Coalition

Thank you Senator Weinberg for your sponsorship of this very important bill as well as all the other bills you have sponsored and supported that will benefit the mental health needs of children, low income families, and the more marginalized populations of Montana. You are a blessing to this legislative session!

This is a very important bill because it will meet the needs of so many who have for so long suffered silently, with feelings of hopelessness and shame, and who have too often looked at killing themselves as the only solution toward ending their pain and suffering. It is important to mention the many groups of people that will benefit from the implementation of a Statewide Suicide Prevention Program:

- **Children:** A very obvious group who are affected by suicide in this state. For 10-24 year olds, suicide is the second leading cause of death in Montana (SAMHSA, 2006).
- **Victims of childhood abuse, as well as domestic abuse (both adults and children).** One in four victims of domestic abuse attempt suicide ([www.Suicide.org](http://www.Suicide.org))
- **Native Americans** who are often experiencing the combination of generational impacts of oppression, hopelessness, alcoholism, abuse, and marked lack of mental health resources on the reservation, which all contribute to an increased risk of suicides.
- **Veterans who suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)** which has been linked to higher rates of suicide among veterans. Veterans suffering from combat related physical disabilities are also at a higher risk for suicide. Bullman and Kang's (1996) study of veterans found that combat woundedness and physical injury increased suicidal behavior. Several studies have confirmed an increased risk of suicidal behavior in veterans with a diagnosis of PTSD (e.g. Davidson, Hughes, Blazer, & George, 1991; Hendin & Haas, 1991; Kramer, Lindy, Green, Grace & Leonard, 1994). Thoughts of ending one's life as well as previous suicide attempts have been significantly correlated with a diagnosis of PTSD in veterans, as well as 82.6% of veterans in outpatient treatment reporting symptoms of suicidal ideation (Kramer et al., 1994). Moreover, a high preponderance of anxiety disorders, particularly PTSD, has been found in veterans with completed suicide, relative to the general population of completed suicides (Lehmann, McCormick, & McCracken, 1995).
- **Police officers**, who often suffer quietly from the impacts of PTSD or secondary traumatic stress from simply observing or hearing about threats to the lives of others around them on a consistent daily basis.
- **Those living in more frontier settings** in Montana and who experience more isolation.

As you can see, we have many in our state who need the support of this bill. I don't think enough attention can be given to this very serious health problem plaguing our state. I implore this committee to seriously considering the passage of this bill. Thank you.

Sincerely,

*Kristin Best*

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